

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. FANNIE M. JACKSON COPPIN.

A giant intellect and powerful force of character, with keen insight to duty and a wise zealousness in the discharge of the same, a well-developed business capacity of unusual proportions, supported by strong executive and financial abilities, are not as a rule the general combined possessions of the women of any race. Indeed, they are the sacred combined endowments of the few. Such a woman of such rare qualifications is Mrs. Fannie M. Jackson Coppin, who was born a slave in Washington, D. C., and was purchased by her aunt, Mrs. Sarah Clark. She was then sent to Newport, R. I., where she lived at service with the well-known Calverts family, who sent her to school. She afterwards, through the kindness of this family, entered the High School, from which she graduated; thence to Oberlin College, in Ohio, where she took the men's course, because in the course laid down for the women there certain studies were omitted. Feeling as she did that she must take all the studies of the highest course in the institution accounts for her departure from the general rules under which the female students were governed as to departments. She proved herself equal to the task and stood side by side and shoulder to shoulder with the men in whose department she had so wisely entered.

She has the honor of being the first colored person to teach a class at Oberlin College, which she taught with marvelous success for two years.